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6 October 1972

PRESIDENT BACKS BUGGING INQUIRY

Rates It Over Investigation of Hiss—Witness Asserts He Spied on Democrats

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 5 — President Nixon said today that the recently completed Federal investigation of the break-in at Democratic headquarters has been so thorough and complete that it made the 1948 investigation of Alger Hiss look like "a Sunday school exercise."

At a news conference in his White House office, Mr. Nixon recalled the Hiss inquiry, in which he took part as a young Congressman. He spoke in response to a reporter's request that the Republicans "make a clean brest about what you were trying to get done at the Watergate." [Question 9, Page 28.]

"Now when we talk about a clean breast," the President said, "Let's look at what has happened. The F.B.I. has assigned 133 agents to this investigation. It followed out 1,800 leadds. It conducted 1,500 interviews."

Convicted of Perjury

The Hiss investigation, he said, "was basically a Sunday School exercise compared to the amount of effort that was put into" the break-in and alleged bugging of the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex.

Mr. Hiss, a former State Department official, was convicted of perjury in 1950 after he denied passing secret documents to Whittaker Chambers, a Time magazine editor. He served nearly four years in prison.

In his news conference, the President said that he endorsed the effort put into the Watergate investigation because "I wanted every lead carried out to the end because I wanted to be sure that no member of the White House staff and no man or woman in a position of major responsibility in the Committee for Re-election [of the President] had anything to do with this kind of reprehensible activity."

Noting that a Federal grand jury had indicted seven men on charges of conspiring to wiretap, tap telephones and photograph stolen documents at the Democratic headquarters, Mr. Nixon refused further comment on the case because "it is now time to have the judicial process go forward and for the evidence to be presented."

Former Nixon Aides

Two of the seven defendants in the pending trial, G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt Jr., are former White House aides in the Nixon Administration. Mr. Liddy was employed as counsel to the Nixon campaign's finance committee on June 17, the day five of the defendants were arrested inside the Democrats' offices. One of those arrested, James W. McCord Jr., was the Republican party's security coordinator at the time of the break-in.

Mr. Hunt left the White House, where he worked as a highly paid part-time consultant. Mr. Liddy and Mr. McCord resigned from the Nixon re-election committee in June.

The Justice Department has stressed that neither the Federal Bureau of Investigation nor the grand jury found any evidence to connect the alleged bugging to anyone who was not indicted. But Alfred C. Baldwin 3d, who says he was a member of the Espionage operation and has become the Government's chief witness in the case, said today that he personally delivered logs of conversations he overheard in the Democratic headquarters to a Nixon re-election committee official who was not one of the seven men indicted.

Says He Monitored Calls

In a long interview in the Los Angeles Times of today, Mr. Baldwin, a 36-year-old former F.B.I. agent, said that he had spent three weeks monitoring telephone and other conversations while he was an employe of the re-election committee. He said that he had worked in a room in a Howard Johnson Motor Lodge across the street from the Watergate Complex.

At one point in the operation, Mr. Baldwin recounted, he called Mr. McCord in Miami and told him that he had recorded "some important conversations." He said Mr. McCord had instructed him to deliver logs of the conversation to someone at the Nixon campaign office whose name he could not remember.

Mr. Baldwin said that he decided to become a Government witness in the Watergate case, in return for an informal promise he would not be prosecuted, when the Nixon campaign committee tried to disavow his association with it after the break-in and arrests on June 17.

"Sometime after McCord was released on bond," Mr. Baldwin told the Los Angeles Times, "he telephoned me and I told him my attorneys knew the whole story."

"The whole story0" he quoted Mr. McCord as replying. "You mean you told him the whole story."

Mr. Baldwin said Mr. McCord then said, "Your position is that you were working for McCord Associates, not for the re-election committee." McCord Associates is an electronics consulting concern headed by the defendant.

A short time before, Mr. Baldwin said, he also tried to call Frederick La Rue, a former counsel to President Nixon "on loan" to the campaign committee, who had approved Mr. Baldwin's appointment as a committee security agent.

Mr. La Rue was friendly at first, Mr. Baldwin said, until "I told him I had been there over the weekend when the arrests were made." He continued, "His whole tone of voice suddenly changed. 'Where are you now?' he asked. 'Where can I call you back?'"

Twenty minutes later, Mr. Baldwin told The Los Angeles Times, Paul O'Brien, an attorney for the re-election committee, called to arrange a meeting with Mr. Baldwin's lawyers.

"My attorneys felt that Paul O'Brien's main purpose was to determine if I could document my employment with the committee," he said. "We were looking to the committee for guidance on the case, since I was their employe. But we were getting nothing but a runaround. The committee apparently was disavowing my employment."

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